

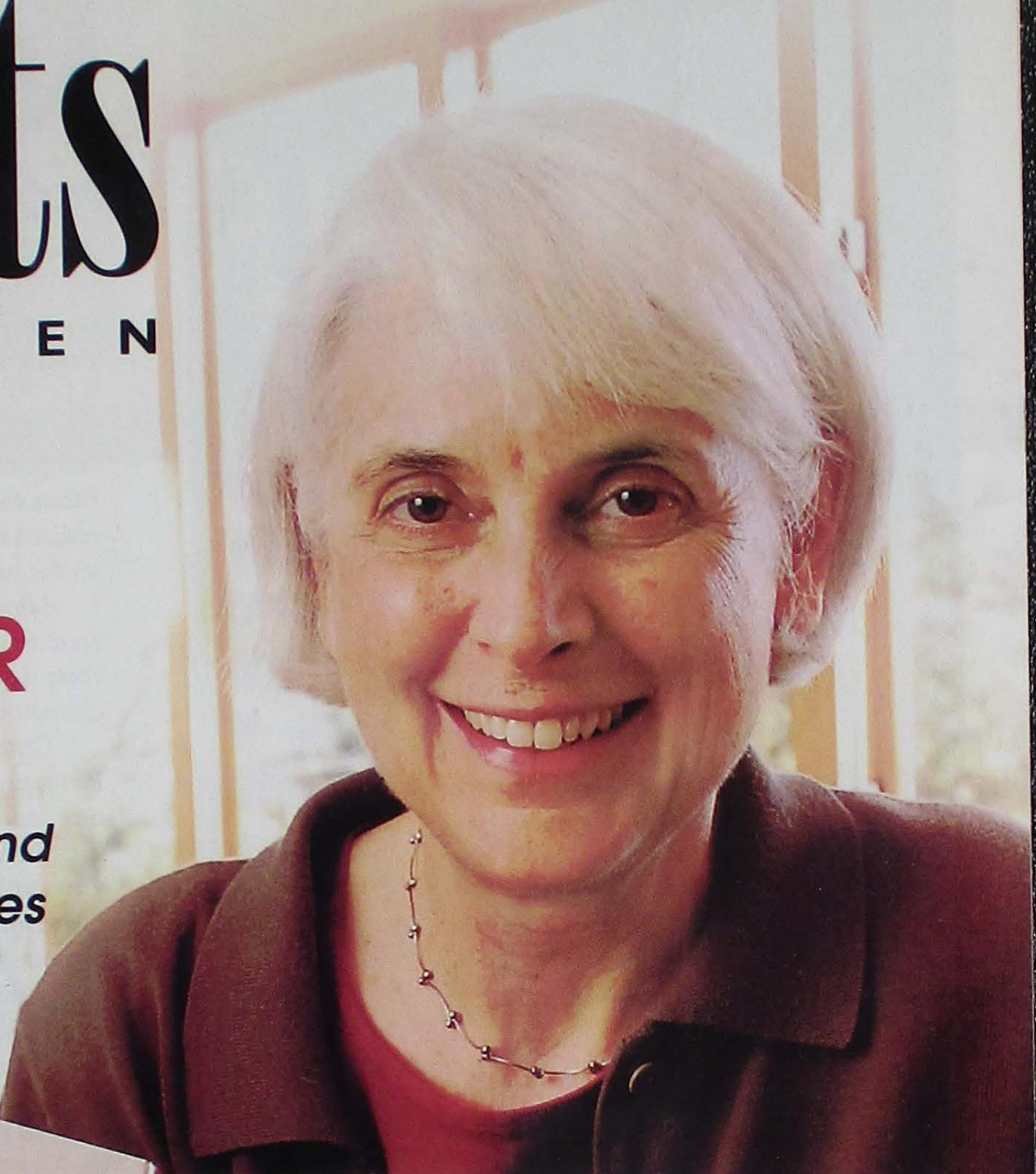
MARCH 2006

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Three weddings IN FOUR MONTHS

*Keeping community and
commitment as priorities*



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NOTES *from the newsroom*

By Amy Wahle

Facets Editor

My hope is that even if you're tired of every other magazine and publication featuring weddings lately, you will still enjoy Facets this month. I had the idea of a "wedding issue" before I realized it was wedding season. After all, my own wedding date is set for June 3.

My dress is sleek and satin, strapless and embroidered with accenting pearls. I didn't want a ball gown like every other bride these days. All I can say is that it is gorgeous, and I found it on clearance at Storybook Weddings in Boone.

Getting my dress was a big step, but yet another detail. Planning is constant. However, in the midst of all my planning, I met and interviewed Mary Kay Vogel. She will have had three daughters married between January and April this year. The interview was a privilege. Vogel shared how her three girls have kept their family and friends the priority amidst all the details and planning. They aren't out to impress anyone.

"I think some of us get focused on putting on this show," Vogel said in the interview. "(My daughters) are doing this to make a commitment to their husbands, not to put on a pageant."

Of course, Andrew and I want our families and our commitment to be priorities. Amazingly, however, I realized how easily the details were escalating out of hand. The talk with Vogel was a refreshing reminder. I hope her experience is a reminder to keep family first for you also, even if you aren't planning a wedding.

With barely three months to finish all the details for my big day, I am still enjoying every moment. Deb Atkinson has a bridal boot camp program, if you are interested. I also found helpful hints in this month's Art Watch, featuring ideas on photography, flowers and china and flatware.

After Andrew and I say, "I do," the anticipation will have come and gone. I am eager to start a new life with him, especially because I am so confident in the love, respect and commitment of our relationship. A new columnist and published author, Laurie Winslow Sargent, shares her parenting wisdom on how to help your children learn to choose a spouse so they can have a healthy, life-long marriage.

Whether you are or will be planning a wedding for yourself, a child, a grandchild or friend, enjoy this issue of Facets. If nothing else, join in the excitement of others.



Amy Wahle can be reached at 232-2161, Ext. 472, or at awahle@amestrib.com.

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Facet > 1. One of the flat surfaces cut on a gemstone.

2. The particular angle from which something is considered.

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3 TIPS

to Bring Out the Best in Your Flower Girl or Ring-Bearer



Four-year-old Tyler stood painstakingly stock-still with the groomsmen during the entire wedding ceremony holding the ring pillow. But when asked to stand again later for photos, he cried out, "No way!" He'd reached his limit. At least he didn't turn the pillow into a hocky-sack or make goofy faces at

the guests right when the bride and groom said, "I do."

If your wiggly tot is destined to walk down the aisle with the wedding party, will guests sigh, "Ooooh, how adorable!" or gasp at a not-a-funniest American home video moment in the making? To help prevent wedding bloopers:

- **Before rehearsal night, find out exactly what your child is expected to do.** Will your child skip down the aisle, tossing flowers? Or slowly and solemnly march in step with music? At the end of the aisle, can he sit down, and where? With you, or out of the room with a sitter? Ask yourself if the expectations are appropriate for your child's age and temperament and if they can be modified.
- **Before rehearsal night, tell your child what to expect and give her some practice.** Show a wedding video (yours or a friend's) including the boring parts. Pretend-play what happens when and how long it takes. Help her learn to sit quietly at a movie, concert, PTA meeting or worship service. Keep trying, and praise her efforts.
- **On the big day, keep your child's needs in mind. Remember his typical nap, snack, exercise and emotional needs.** Can he burn energy at a fast-food indoor playground before changing into his mini-tux? Cuddle in a quiet place with you with a story, before entering the wedding chaos? Reassure your child that you believe he'll do a great job and that yummy wedding cake will be his reward. Thank him for helping make your friend's wedding day special.



Written by Laurie Winslow Sargent
www.ParentChildPlay.com



Bridal **BUFF**

By Debra Atkinson

Counting down to the big day is a big deal.

From the bride to the flower girl and from family to friends, we all like to look good on the "I do" date. Without careful planning during the crazy days of organizing (not to mention spending hours and dollars on the wedding, the dress, the guest list), you may

find yourself skipping meals, not exercising, eating out and on the go.

In other words, you may end up doing just the opposite of what you want to do. Remember that the dress of your dreams is only as perfect as the level of confidence you feel while you wear it floating down the aisle.

Rather than settle on a dress that isn't quite the one or feeling less than heavenly in it, begin healthy habits now; habits that you want to share with your life partner. The dress of your dreams will not only be a possibility, but also a dress that flatters your features rather than a memory of what you had to squeeze into.

While you can't spot reduce, you can spot tone. You can sculpt your muscles into shape. There are exercises that you won't want to go sleeveless without, ways of making your exit in that backless dress something to talk about and sequences that will inspire bolder shoulders for that strapless dress.

For the bride, there's the core work for the honeymoon bikini. The biggest key though? Thinking that from this day forward, you have a lifelong relationship with physical activity. Your commitment to your partner goes past the wedding date, true? No matter how many days, weeks or months to the "big day," your health goes far beyond that.

Even if you aren't the bride, looking nice on the special day is just as important. That said, as long as you have a reason for getting started, there is no reason not to put it to work for you!

There are a few things to consider before jumping head first into bridal boot camp:

- How long do you have?
- Which decade of life are you in?
- What do you already

know about the way your body burns calories and handles stress?

COUNTDOWN.

None. If you are headed to the Justice of the Peace next week, you might as well smile and eat cake. The only real thing left to do is go long on

The biggest key though? Thinking that from this day forward, you have a lifelong relationship with physical activity.

rest and short on alcohol, salt, refined carbs and caffeine in your final days. You can control your stress level, get more sleep and capture a photo album-worthy shot best this way.

Eight weeks or less. You can see and feel significant changes in your shape and posture in a short time. Choose a dress that you love and that fits you now and then work to accentuate those features it highlights. You want to prioritize cardiovascular exercise and then supplement with arm- or shoulder-sculpting exercises depending on your anxiety source or dress style.

In 12 to 16 weeks. You can make measurable body composition changes, boost metabolism for long term calorie burning and tone and

firm muscles that will give you newfound confidence to go with your marital status. Goals of losing 20 pounds are realistic, just keep in mind that it isn't the scale that determines your success, it is about creating lean muscle tissue and losing fat.

In that exchange process your inches, proportions, and energy level will be the changes to watch! You want to emphasize quality cardiovascular exercise three to four times a week and perform resistance training at least twice a week. It will help your stress level too! Budget time for yoga or Pilates to help you stand tall and sleek.

More than six months. Larger weight loss goals are attainable and realistic with the right combination of nutrition and exercise. Start walking now. All the facials, manicures and pedicures in the world can't match the glow that comes from good health and self-care. If you spend your nights staying up late with alcohol and cigarettes, your skin will reflect that. A diet full of fruits, vegetables and other essential nutrients coupled with proper exercise is no match for a couple of hours at a spa.

TIME OF YOUR LIFE

If you're in your 20s heading down the aisle, you can allow cardiovascular exercise to predominate your prenuptial prep.

The 30s bring a slight slow down of metabolism that calls for heavier lifting in order to offset it. Though you want to

continue to do cardiovascular work, strength training needs to be in the picture.

In your 40s and 50s spend equal time on cardiovascular exercise and resistance training. Your posture, as well as your bone density, will thank you. Add stretching to retain flexibility lost with age.

From the 60s and on, whether you are the blushing bride or attending family and friends, continue this balance of heart, muscle and stretching activities along with nutrition practices that will keep you healthy anniversary after anniversary.

KNOW YOUR BODY

We all know those people who eat hotdogs and sundaes and never gain a pound. We also know people who think about them and gain weight. To love the body you're living in, know where you are on that continuum. Then modify the information above to fit your needs.

There is no one size fits all in weddings, fitness or health. I've got to personalize it to you. Say yes to your health commitment and "I do" to doing it forever, and you won't just be preparing for a day but a lifetime of feeling amazing.



Debra Atkinson can be reached at 296-2989 or at debra_atkinson@msn.com.

MARRIAGE AND MONEY

By Karen Petersen

I am sure most newlyweds plan to live happily ever after when they say "I do." In the planning for that happy life, most of us believe money doesn't buy happiness. Not only does money not buy happiness; money is often the cause of unhappiness in marriages.

And amid the financial and emotional difficulty, many people find it hard to bring up the matter of financial health. In fact, some do not even know the questions to get started. It is my job to ask the tough questions. I meet with couples to facilitate this kind of conversation to get them to think about how to join their lives financially.

Here is my contribution to prevent money from being the culprit that ends the happily-ever-after plans.

Long before the wedding day, have a serious, thoughtful and truthful conversation about how you, as a couple, will make financial decisions. Talking about your money values and expectations is one of the most important pre-marriage conversations to have.

Many couples plan the wedding and forget to plan their life. Time before the wedding is spent on invitations, music, rehearsal dinner, deciding where the stepmother will sit, reservations for the honeymoon and on and on. Remember, planning the ceremony and honeymoon are one-time events. The couple will spend a lifetime earning, spending, saving and investing money. Couples should talk about how each handles his or her money today and how money in their marriage should be handled. And, as unromantic as it sounds, draft a written agreement.

Decisions that aren't made before the wedding will likely come about with in a heated discussion afterwards.

MAKE SURE TO DISCUSS:

What you owe and to whom.

Each partner should share a list of all debts and payment methods. Also, swap credit reports – I kid you not. If someone is not willing to do that, it should put up a big red flag. Remember, those problems will become the other person's problems after the big day.

Once, during a meeting with a soon-to-be-wed couple I asked about debt. The gentleman, in a low, barely audible voice said, "I have \$36,000 in unsecured debt." His wife-to-be, who never carried a balance on her credit card, physically moved back and said, "How many zeros is that?" The wedding plans were put on hold.

The wisdom of creating three pots.

Forget throwing all the money into one big household account. Many couples implement some sort of "yours, mine and ours" bill-paying system, in which each partner's income goes into their own individual checking accounts. Individual accounts are used to pay personal expenses and make an agreed upon contribution to a joint account for

family expenses like the mortgage, utilities and groceries.

There are decisions to be made, though. Some questions to consider are: Do you each contribute an equal amount for the monthly bills, or do you contribute proportionately based on income? How much money can each of you spend with no questions asked? Will you have a joint saving account for future goals?

How do you use credit cards?

Couples should answer these questions and consider the following recommendations for stress free credit card use:

How many credit cards do you use?

I recommend two. If there is a problem with one card, there is still another to use. And should you lose your wallet, you only lose two cards. How many open credit card accounts do you have that you don't use?

There is no need to have active cards unused. This tells creditors that the person has

the ability to acquire significant debt.

What is the interest rate on each card?

Be informed. Know the interest rate, and read the fine print.

Do you move balances from one card to another?

This may seem like a good idea, but I don't recommend this game.

Do you pay your credit card bill in full each month?

If you do not, make it a priority. Don't charge more than you can afford.

Like all of life, it's a journey; strive for progress not perfection. As you say "I do," remember to live happily ever after.



Karen Petersen can be reached at 232-2785 or at karen@MyMoreThanMoney.net.



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Happily Ever After

Helping Your Children Envision and Anticipate Long, Lasting Marriages

Written by Laurie Winslow Sargent

Is it actually possible to utter the words "til death do us part" and mean it? Can a marriage, decades after wedding vows are made, continue to be nurturing and fulfilling . . . even exciting?

Yes, I tell my daughters, ages 9 and 15 and my son, 19. And believe it or not, even in this age where divorce is commonplace, my children actually believe life-long, happy marriages aren't just in fairy tales. They meet friend after friend affected painfully by divorce. They see broken marriages on TV treated with a shrug. Yet they remain positive about the prospect of marrying someday, happily, for life.

That's because they've had the privilege of seeing within their own family tree a long succession of healthy life-long marriages, including seeing their Dad and I, who have been married for 27 years. Not only have they seen us as best buddies but also as flirty lovers. Our 9-year-old made us a card for our anniversary stating, "You are the cutest couple!" Our teen sometimes rolls her eyes when we kiss saying, "Get a room!"

Consequently, it's not hard for

me to instill optimism in my kids about marriage being fun and satisfying. But I'm fully aware that many of you come from a line of divorces and abuses. Physical, mental, sexual and emotional abuse destroys families, wounds women and affects children's abilities to choose healthy relationships as they grow up. You may wonder how you can pass a positive outlook on to your kids if you lack that confidence yourself. Is it truly possible to find a thoughtful, trustworthy and kind spouse?

While some children become jaded by unhealthy examples, others may be naïve from seeing only healthy examples. So all of our children, I think, need this advice from the time they are very small:

"Learn the signs of healthy and unhealthy relationships."

If we keep our eyes open, we can find countless opportunities to discuss healthy relationships with our kids. When you see good marriage role models — even eighty-year-old couples, point them out!

Be frank about signs of emotional abuse (often a precursor to physical abuse) so your kids can spot it in any relationships: friendships, dating relationships and family relationships. I think it critical to sensitize our daughters to

this and help them learn to trust their instincts in relationships. They need to know that compassionate effort to help (i.e. "fix") a person who lacks good relationship skills is not wise.

Television provides plenty of small opportunities for bad examples. If on a show a wife puts her husband down sarcastically, or a husband controls his wife in an unhealthy way, call it as you see it. Tell your child that hurts marriages. Within your own marriage, avoid hurtful sarcasm (which can have a nasty edge, especially when a spouse is feeling down in the dumps). Expect and nurture respect. If you recognize unhealthy signs in your own marriage, get help.

"Expect Marriage to be a Partnership."

For our daughters to understand and expect this, we must build their self-confidence and independence one step at a time. Tell them what male/female roles in the home are taken on my choice, not by ability, and teach them as many skills as possible. That way they won't ever feel they must choose a spouse to take care of them. Controlling people aren't likely to be attracted to them.

If you take turns managing household finances with your spouse, your daughters will not be afraid of handling money. Teach your kids to budget well, and when they marry, they will see that money handling can be a partnership not a dividing influence or tool for control.

A marriage is a place to plan, dream and make choices together. Being spiritually like-minded will nurture a marriage, too. Spirituality as well as finances will both affect day-to-day choices and family goals.

"Expect conflict, but know it can be resolved in healthy ways."

Kids will always feel it when

there is tension in the home. Arguing in healthy ways and resolving the conflict in front of the kids is better than presenting an appearance of never having a disagreement. For one parent to admit he or she is wrong — then kiss and make up — teaches healthy conflict resolution.

When traveling together through life, decade after decade, spouses make countless adjustments for each other, and it isn't always easy. But adjusting or accommodating does not have to mean simply enduring. Key ingredients to long and happy marriages include trust, an enduring sense of humor, honor and mutual respect.

"Expect marriage to be fun."

Marriage can, and should mean: laughter over silly things, intimacy, fond vacation memories, hugs and compassion during crises and joy over individual and family accomplishments. A bank of fond memories can be drawn from over and over again during decades of marriage with a well-chosen spouse. That cements bonds of love. I believe we all hope for that for our children.

I hope that your children learn how to choose well. Then someday you and your daughter or son can be confident jumping into a car with a "Just Married" banner trailing. Hopefully they will be setting off on a fulfilling and exciting life-long journey.



Laurie Winslow Sargent can be reached at 292-9641 or find her online at www.ParentChildPlay.com. For more information about emotional abuse and a list of signs of healthy relationships, visit www.ParentChildPlay.com.



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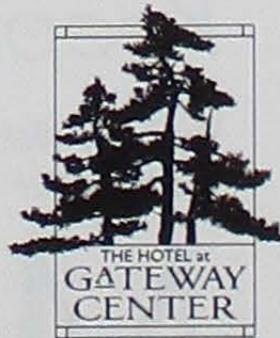
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Photo by: CALEB JAMIN

Elizabeth, Gretchen and Suzanne

Three weddings IN FOUR MONTHS

Keeping community and commitment as priorities

By Amy Wahle
Staff Writer

Mary Kay Vogel, of Ames, didn't know what was getting started when her daughter Gretchen got engaged last April. Gretchen met her fiancé, Persey, while working in Berlin, Germany, as a scientific news reporter.

"I am sure they had been talking about (engagement), but it was a wonderful surprise to us," Vogel said. With a year to plan, she became a sounding board and support system for her 33-year-old daughter as she

started planning the wedding that will be in Berlin on April 29.

In the meantime, her two other daughters also had serious dating relationships. "They all make each others' faces light up," Vogel said. "When you see that, you know they have found someone who will really love them."

She was right.

Her 32-year-old daughter, Suzanne, was engaged on Oct. 27. The wedding date jumped in front of her sister's to Feb. 25.

Less than a month later, her 24-year-old daughter, Elizabeth, got a diamond and set a wedding date too. This time the date was set even earlier, Jan. 14. Her fiancé, Omar Tesdell, from Huxley, had plans to study in Peru in February and wanted to take his bride with him.

The weddings were stacking up, but so was the joy, Vogel said. She and her daughter Elizabeth had work to do, and in the meantime, Suzanne in Kansas City and Gretchen in Berlin, were making their own plans.



Photo by: CALEB JAMIN

Omar & Elizabeth



Gretchen & Persey



A.J. & Suzanne

Photo by: CALEB JAMIN

How she manages.

A common thread through all the weddings has been community. Vogel said planning three weddings in four months is possible because her daughters uphold family and celebrating their marriage commitment most of all. She and her husband have set the mark with a lasting marriage of 36 years.

"I think some of us get focused on putting on this show," she said. "(My daughters) are doing this to make a commitment to their husbands, not to put on a pageant."

Elizabeth and Tesdell set the pace in that respect. Forget the tradition of hiding the beauty of the bride until the grand entrance, they had a bride and groom meet-and-greet before their ceremony.

When details come from the heart.

Vogel said family and friends were as eager to share the special day as they were to share every detail. Even the women she met for the first time at Tesdell's church, Palestine Lutheran in Huxley, were excited to help with serving the meal and anything that needed to be done.

"I came into a room of four tables of women for a shower, (and) you just felt like you were surrounded by love and their excitement for Omar and Elizabeth," Vogel said. "I didn't care if they served sloppy joes at the wedding – you knew it would come from the heart."

From that point on, the details of the special day didn't matter to Vogel or her daughter.

"So many people were contributing that the pressure of everything being just perfect was taken away," she said. "and that was a gift."

The love and support didn't stop once the bride and groom headed out. "(Other

friends) were there 'til midnight doing dishes," Vogel said. "We are just surrounded by people committed to loving each other (and) loving us, too."

Although there is still planning taking place for her other daughters' weddings in Kansas City and Berlin – community and commitment are the priorities for Vogel and her girls. Vogel said a way Gretchen will keep the focus on the commitment is in her gift registry.

"Since they are both young professionals that don't need too many things, so she has asked guests to give to the charity of their choice," she said.

She has also learned a lot about weddings fast, but most of all, that she can't always do things on her own and must trust that things will work out.

What she learned.

Vogel said she has enjoyed every minute of both the planning and supporting roles. She has also learned a lot about weddings fast, but most of all, that she can't always do things on her own and must trust that things will work out.

"If people asked if they can help you, they really mean it," Vogel said. "I learned to take them up on it."

When her faith community offered to make and serve the meal at the wedding, Vogel accepted. Other guests were invited to bring bread and desserts. Tesdell's family, who are of Palestinian ethnicity brought hummus and baklava along with ethnic music and dancing. An extra dab of culture was added to the special day.

"I just felt so blessed by the whole event and everyone that helped," Vogel said.

When she got overwhelmed.

Although the first of three weddings went even better than Vogel could have expected, there were overwhelming moments physically and emotionally. But taking time to physically relax and spiritually focus helped prevent oncoming stress.

Vogel takes a yoga class that allows her to meditate and practice deep breathing to calm her mind. Another calm within the storm has been her father. Vogel and her family were very involved with his fulltime care before he died in August. From a spiritual aspect, he still provides support to her during emotionally intense times as her daughters get married one by one.

"When I feel overwhelmed, I turn to my communion of saints," she said. Her dad is just one of those saints but of the utmost spiritual support.

"In the hard times, I felt dad's hand on the situation (and) his support is still with me."

Elizabeth's ceremony was even more of a spiritual experience than she expected. "It was a very personal experience, but it was very real," Vogel said.

She felt his presence as well as that of Tesdell's deceased mother that day.

"It was such a blessing," she said.

"When I look forward to the other weddings – having had a quick run – I trust we will be blessed in the same way again," she said.



Amy Wahle can be reached at 232-2161, Ext. 472, or awahle@amestrib.com.

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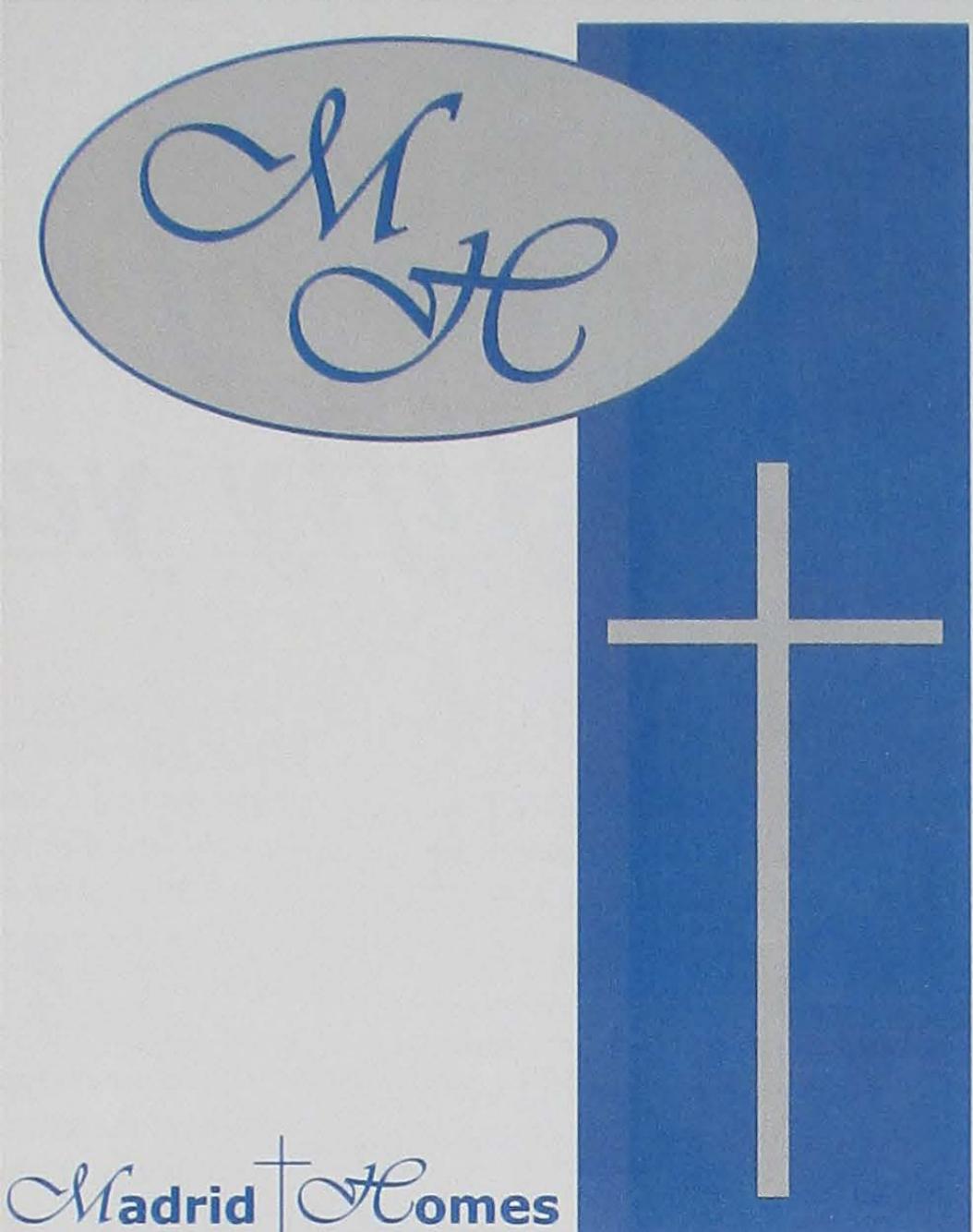
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Pictures of a wedding from fifty years ago

Written by Nancy Lewis

It's been 50 years now. When I look at our wedding pictures now I think, "We look so young!" And we were very young. The year was 1955. It was June, just three weeks before we graduated from college. Neither of us had ever held a full-time job, though I was going to start one in five days. Ed was a graduate student.

The evening before the wedding, there was a rehearsal followed by a dinner for our families and the wedding party. I can only remember two items from the menu. The first course consisted of half a grapefruit with a maraschino cherry in the middle. And the salad was a wedge of iceberg lettuce covered in Thousand Island dressing.

I had bought my wedding dress off the rack. It was embroidered organdy with a round collar and short sleeves. The skirt was "waltz length," which meant just above the ankles, with three tiers of material, very full. All of this skirt was held out by a hoop petticoat.

On the day of the wedding it rained. Rain in June happens often in Springfield, Ohio, but no one had thought about how to get me down nineteen steps from the front door of my parents' house. With Ed's dad holding an umbrella over the skirt and my dad holding one over my head, we managed.

In the picture that was taken of my dad and I just before we were to walk down the aisle, we both looked scared to death. I'm sure that at least part of my fear was that I had to kneel in that skirt, and if I were to kneel on the hoop, the whole

back of the skirt would be flipped up. Dad may have been worrying about my thirteen-year-old sister, who was the bridesmaid and who was walking down the aisle in her first high-heeled shoes.

In the etiquette of the time, the wedding was "semi-formal." That meant that the men in the wedding party wore ordinary business suits. No attempt was made to have the suits match. Most of the young men in the wedding owned only one anyway.

The ceremony was brief. While it was popular to have a vocalist sing "Because," "I Love You Truly" or another popular wedding number, we decided to have a half-hour of organ music while the guests were seated.

Emily Post, who wrote the etiquette book we all used as our "how-to" guide, said that cake and punch were the appropriate things to serve at an afternoon wedding reception. But we served ice cream and coffee also, because that was the local custom.

My mother wore a navy blue full-skirted dress patterned with white flowers. My new mother-in-law wore a navy blue full-skirted dress with touches of white embroidery. My new grandmother-in-law wore a navy blue and white checked full-skirted dress. My "going-away" dress was also navy blue and white. (Actually, we only went forty miles to Columbus and stayed the night in our new apartment — the honeymoon had to wait until September when Ed had a break from graduate school.)

My cousins printed "Just Married" on the sides and back of our car in shaving cream. Our first stop was a gas station

where we could wash off the shaving cream. We had to escape from the parade of honking cars that followed our departure. Three years later when we traded the car, we could still see the marks from the shave cream.

The day after the wedding, my picture and a very long article about the wedding appeared in the society section of the Springfield paper. I had posed for this picture the weekend before the wedding, and the bouquet that I'm holding in the picture is nothing like the bouquet that I actually carried. The article included a paragraph about my dress. This was followed by descriptions of the outfits of the wedding party, as well as the dresses our mothers and Ed's grandmother wore. Each member of the wedding party and reception helpers were mentioned, along with their hometowns. The article concluded by listing "out-of-town guests," again with their hometowns included. The society editor must have asked for the names and addresses of everyone who was invited to the wedding, because over half of the people listed were not actually present.

The event wasn't very big. Maybe 100 people were there. The wedding wasn't very fancy. It seems as though that doesn't matter since the marriage has lasted fifty years.



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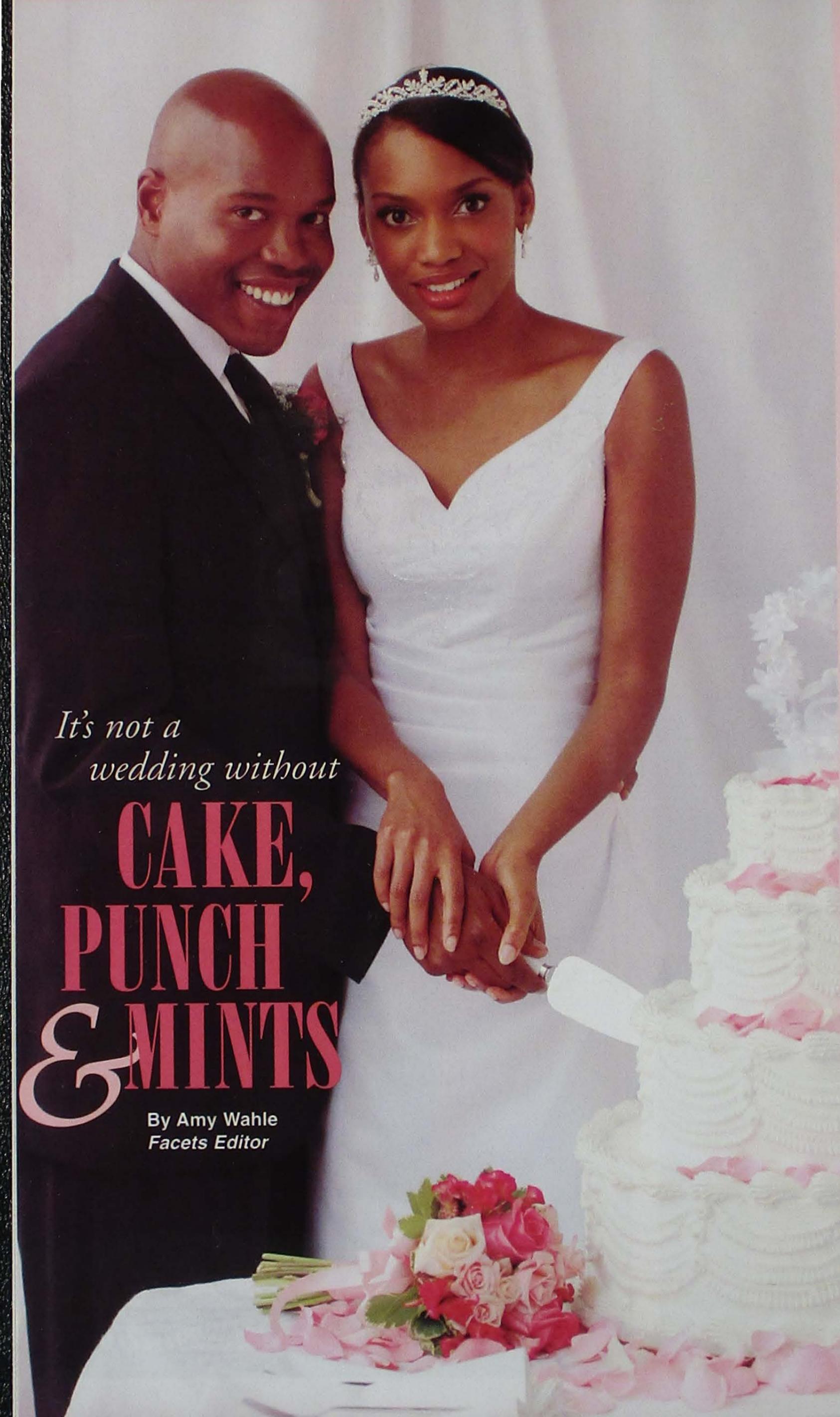
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FOOD BITES



*It's not a
wedding without*

CAKE, PUNCH & MINTS

By Amy Wahle
Facets Editor

WEDDING CREAM MINTS

1 (3 oz.) package cream cheese
3 c. powdered sugar
1/4 tsp. or less flavor extract to taste
(vanilla, almond or mint)
bowl of granulated sugar
food coloring

Mix cheese, flavoring and coloring. Slowly add sugar eventually kneading it in with fingers. Roll into marble sized balls and coat each with granulated sugar. Press into mold and pop out. Store in refrigerator or freezer. Serves 50 to 75 mints.

Plan 2 mints per person. About 2/3 invited will come to a wedding.

WEDDING PUNCH

1 (46 oz.) can pineapple-grapefruit juice
1 qt. cranberry or cranapple juice
1 small bottle ginger ale (not 2 liter)
1 qt. rainbow sherbet
7-Up

Shake cans of juice, empty into container. Break sherbet into pieces or freeze into a bundt pan mold. Add to juice. Stir well. Pour the ginger ale directly onto the sherbet, and add 7-Up less than an hour before serving.

Mix approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour ahead of serving time.

A WEDDING CAKE GIFT

Wedding cake is oh so expensive. A basic three-tiered decorated cake can start at about \$200 and up. A special gift to a bride and her family who are pinching pennies to use for their wedding would be to make the cake.

If you are considering it, here are a few tips to make it extra special.

Start with a frosted cake or a plain cake.

- Lightly dusting the top of the cake with confectioners' sugar or cocoa powder makes a nice finishing touch.

Place paper doilies over the cake before dusting to make wonderful lacy patterns.

Create your own stencils using parchment paper cut into designs such as stars, polka dots, flowers, diamonds, vines and waves.

Use both confectioners' sugar and cocoa powder to add depth to your own design. Place the stencil on top of the cake and dust with cocoa powder. Carefully remove the stencil and wipe off any remaining cocoa powder. Be very careful not to disturb the cocoa powder, and place the stencil on top of the cake again, this time making sure that the openings are on the parts of the cake that have not been dusted with the cocoa powder. Dust with confectioners' sugar. Carefully

remove the stencil and voila! You'll get a very graphic two-toned design.

- Pile on the flowers such as sweet violets, lavender, honeysuckle, rose petals, borage, bachelor's buttons, Johnny-jump ups and calendulas.

Be sure when using flowers as a decoration that they are clean, all the parts you are using are non-toxic, and that they are pesticide free.

Dusting the flowers with super fine sugar gives a wonderful, sparkly glow to your creation.

- Add fresh fruit.

Fresh berries can be piled on top of cake, sprinkled with confectioners' sugar and garnished with a few fresh mint leaves. Whole strawberries placed around the outside of a

chocolate cake add a touch of color. Kiwis, grapes, orange sections and strawberries can be arranged on the top of a cake and glazed with shiny syrup.

- Chocolate curls, ruffles, jagged slabs and leaves are another easy way to jazz up a cake.

Chocolate curls can be made with a vegetable peeler by simply shaving off pieces of a chocolate block. To get small flakes and curls, make sure the chocolate block is cold. To get larger curls, the surface of the chocolate should be slightly warm but not melted. To get even larger curls, spread melted chocolate, in a thin layer, over a marble slab or a baking sheet, let the chocolate cool then scrape using a knife, spoon or spatula depending on the size and the shape of the curl/ruffle you want.

The little brown CHURCH

By Amy Wahle
Facets Editor

Martin Martinson, of Ames had heard the Little Brown Church song enough. He decided in 1950 he would marry Emma at the quaint church in the woods near Nashua. After all, it was a popular place to tie the knot.

"At least at that point, there were never any divorces from the marriages at that church," Martinson said. "And they let you ring the bell after you were married!"

Now, more than 72,000 people have been married in the Congregational Church that was built in 1862. Several restoration efforts have taken place through the years. The congregation is said to be alive and well with an active Sunday school, youth groups, Bible study and choir.

The church holds a wedding celebration every year on the first Sunday in August. Nearly 700 people annually renew their vows on that day. Rev. Linda Myren, who is pastor at the church, said about two-thirds of the people who get married there make it back at least once to renew their vows.

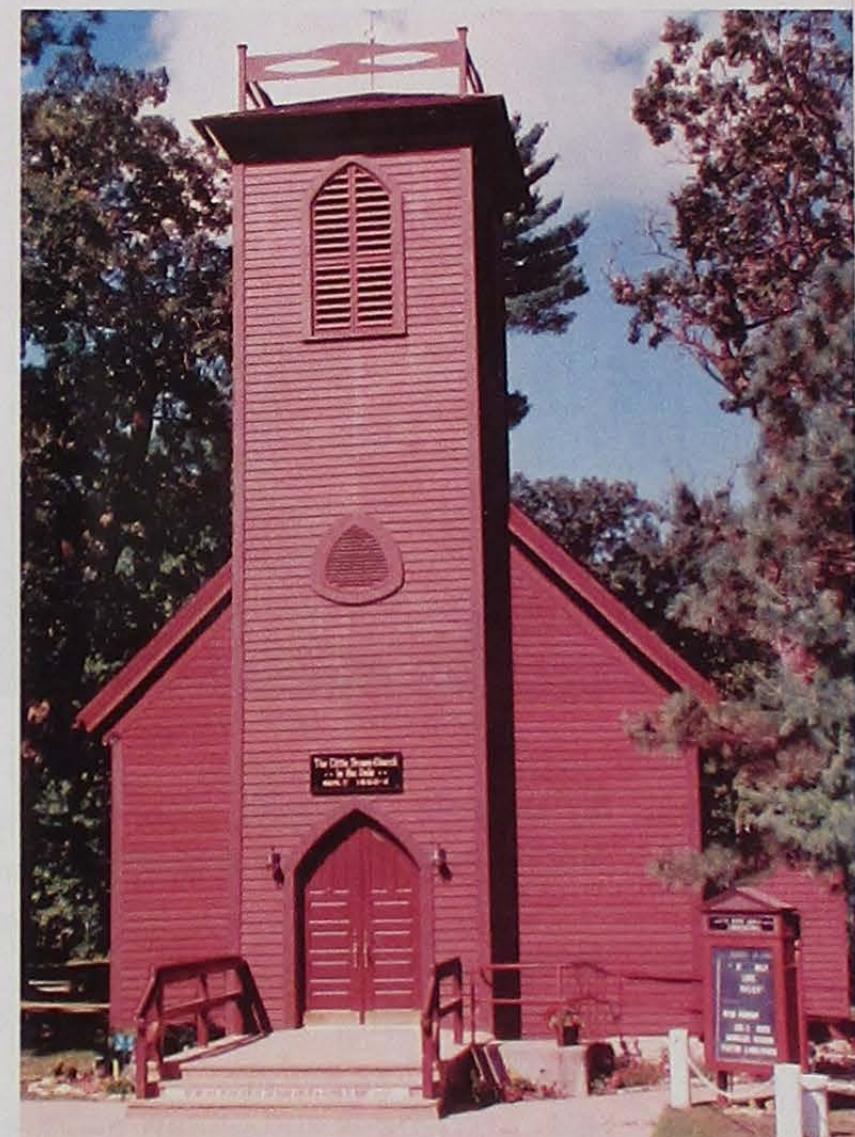
And so the story goes ... William Pitts was traveling by stagecoach to see his wife to be. Being the romantic young man that he was, he saw a charming setting in the woods that he thought would be a wonderful place for a church.

When he returned home, he wrote a poem called "Church in the Wildwood" and later set it to music. He put it in a drawer and forgot about it.

By 1855, a Puritan-Congregational Church in Bradford (southeast of Charles City) began to hold meetings. When the congregation tired of meeting in places like the lawyer's office, the members pooled their resources and laid a foundation for a church in 1860. The building was up by 1862 and completed with a bell in 1864.

Pitts moved back to the area with his wife in 1862. To his surprise, he found a church where he had imagined one could be. He pulled out the song from his drawer and taught it at the school.

The Weatherwax brothers soon began singing the Little Brown Church song as part of



their traveling show, and the catchy tune gained popularity across the Midwest. An influx of small and secret weddings during World Wars I and II helped the Little Brown Church make a name for itself.

"Now it is partly tradition," said Myren, noting that families have had their marriages at the church for up to four generations.

Even the song is still sung in the little brown church that sits in the woods.

For more information, visit the Web site www.littlebrownchurch.org.

Art WATCH

A TIME LINE FOR YOUR florists TO FIND YOUR PERSONAL STYLE



By Melanie Cornwell
Mary Kay's Flowers and Gifts

Beautiful fresh flowers are the crowning touch for every wedding and special occasion. Every bride and groom wants a wedding day that expresses their personal style – and that's an art. Your professional, full-service florist will help you create a special day with memories to last a lifetime.

Securing a florist for your wedding should be done as soon as the date and location are determined.

FLOWERS

Don't worry, booking the date doesn't mean you have to know exactly what you want. Your floral selections are usually made after dresses and tuxedos have been ordered. The colors and styles of your wedding will help guide you in selecting the perfect bouquets, boutonnieres and corsages. Remember that your florist is a valuable resource for ceremony and reception decorating.

Whatever the season, florists will help you choose flowers that are complementary and enhancing ... just keep in mind the timeline to accomplish this.

ASAP Choose a full service professional florist and book the date.

12 to 6 months Meet for initial consultation.

3 months Review and finalize details.

1 month Update florist with any last-minute additions or scheduled changes.

1 week Relax. Your florist will take care of you!

When you meet with your florist, bring your samples and ideas. If you are looking for suggestions, your florist will have photos and books to help you choose flowers, designs and styles that reflect you.

Enjoy your wedding and leave the details to your florist.

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CHOOSING YOUR photographer

By Robert Phillips
Phillips Photography

Some weddings have no photographer; others have Uncle Joe with his dusty old camera. A number of people hire the new guy on the block, and some will hire the same person who photographed their parents' wedding.

Ultimately, it comes down to one question: What's your budget?

Let's examine the pros and cons of each choice.

No photographer: This is only a choice for those whose family doesn't care about photography. Do you really want to be sitting without pictures to show your grandkids?

Uncle Joe: This person means well. He always shows up and snaps pictures at family events. He's a relative or a friend with a good camera. Remember that his skill level varies from understanding how the camera works to clueless. Most have never photographed a wedding before. I don't think this is a great plan, but it's better than no photographer.

New guy: At least this person is serious about photography. He probably has good skills and knows how to look at his images. To decide if he is the right choice for you, look at several complete weddings. Is there variety? Are the images consistent? How are the expressions on people's faces? Are they enjoying themselves?

The established photographer: This person is serious about photography. Some of the best photographers can blend the best of both documentary photojournalism and posed portraiture. This will allow you to keep a personal record for your family and show the fun and action of the special moments. These photographers will still be in business for a while to provide prints after the wed-

ding. Take a look at their reputation to make sure they won't bail out a week before the big day.

Deciding how much to spend on wedding photography is a personal question. It is common for people to spend 10 to 20 percent of the wedding budget on their pictures. That's a good starting point. I personally have photographed weddings where I was 50 percent of the budget and 3 percent of the budget at other huge, expensive weddings.

When photographers quote their base price ask if it includes prints. Some include only proofs, and others include an entire album with all the pictures from the wedding day. After the people have gone and the cake is eaten what remains? Your memories and the pictures. Obviously, as a wedding photographer I will tell you pictures are important. As you work with your budget and your priority list – you can decide for yourself.

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PHOTOS



WHAT ABOUT *china*?

By Rita Houge
Beverley's Gift and China Shop

There are many options for dinnerware – from very formal to very casual. Even the old formal china companies such as Wedgwood and Lenox are making everyday, casual dinnerware and accessories to fit any lifestyle. Many are freezer-oven-table and fall into the category of casual elegance.

Commonly asked questions are:

How long do china patterns stay available?

Formal patterns from major companies remain available for years and many have assurances for completion. These become family heirlooms. Everyday patterns change because color and design trends change. They are usually less expensive, so you may have several everyday patterns at one time or over the course of a lifetime.

What is 18/10 stainless steel flatware?

These numbers are the chromium and nickel percentages in the steel that keep the flatware from staining, spotting and rusting. A heavier piece will have more steel and, hence, more chromium and nickel providing a longer lasting appeal and durability that is reflected in the cost.

What is the difference between crystal and glass?

Crystal contains lead to varying degrees. This gives crystal its characteristic ring and distinctive shine.

What is "fine bone" china?

Fine bone china has oxen bone ash in the clay. It gives china translucency and durability. China is actually very strong despite its fragile appearance. Stoneware, though it appears sturdier, may chip and crack easier because it is glazed at lower temperatures than china.

How do you care for china, crystal and flatware?

Today, almost everything is dishwasher-safe. Dry cycles allow for low heat or no heat, and this is better for all of your dinnerware.

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New ETIQUETTE for Today's Bride

The customers browsing the wedding section these days seem to be looking for an explanation of etiquette for the big day.

As tradition falls by the wayside in more and more ceremonies, people are lost. They are sure about saying "I do" – at least usually – but are unsure of what rules they are expected to follow. Future in-laws are just as uncertain about their role on the wedding day as the brides who are uncertain of what to do with their nieces and nephews (who can be found in the same section looking for a book with the answers, too).

Finding a planner or a book on gowns is easy. However, finding one about specific etiquette rules is a bit more difficult. Fortunately, there are books that fit the bill.

service can plan accordingly with this book. It explains traditional weddings, too, and has lists of ultra-and semi-formal proceedings. Ceremony explanations for different religions are outlined to allow the reader to tailor their service to their wishes as well.

The etiquette guide also shows its more up-to-date nature by discussing divorced and step parents, giving advice about online registries, including an entire chapter on second weddings and covering the renewing of vows.

The book addresses some of the standbys one would expect when planning a wedding. It has a countdown to the wedding, complete with a checklist on what to get done, and fill-in-the-blank wedding announcement ideas.

The guide's magazine feel makes it fun to read. Colored boxes with tips, hints, common questions and did-you-know bits break up the monotony of reading such details. It has large print and moves quickly between topics with diagrams to make it easier to understand. All in all, it's useful and easy to read for anyone planning a wedding.

BRIDAL GUIDE MAGAZINE'S NEW ETIQUETTE FOR TODAY'S BRIDE
written by Diane Forden, editor in chief of Bridal Guide Magazine

I was most impressed with how modern this book actually is. It puts a 21st century twist on age-old wedding tradition. The book suggests contemporary ways of honoring older traditions and explains why they exist. It is a good fit for anyone trying to have a modern wedding while pleasing the more old fashioned members of the family. Even brides who aren't looking for an ultra-modern

DON'T YOU DARE GET



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COREY DONALDSON

DON'T YOU DARE GET MARRIED UNTIL YOU READ THIS

written by Corey Donaldson

With a title like that, this book just begged to be written about. I couldn't help but pick up the book. In it Corey Donaldson lists 500 questions he thinks every couple should answer before getting married.

Donaldson speaks of his own marriage as his way of judging the questions. He believes divorce is occasionally the answer and that the only way to avoid one is to spend time together asking questions like these, without argument and accusation but with understanding.

So he starts by explaining where the questions come from. He asserts that he interviewed over 1,500 people from all walks of life. He says many of the questions were repeated, making

it easier to contain them in the book and divide into chapters like 'Religion and Spirituality,' 'Trust,' 'The Past' and 'Annoyances.'

Aside from just questions, the book offers a list of online resources with everything from quizzes on love and compatibility to ideas for proposing. It also contains a section with advice put together in an unusual way. Instead of giving a personal suggestion or pointedly telling the reader what to do, it lists situations and several possible ways to react with point values ranking the correct choice. It's far more interactive and entertaining than sections of almost accusatory dos and don'ts often found in other books.

Overall, I believe this book is a good way to open a door of communication for couples who are considering marriage, already married or even only dating.

These books are perfect for clearing up any troubles that may be hiding around the corner. Whether it's unanswered questions in a relationship or an uncomfortable ceremony situation, these are two books anyone facing a spring marriage should pick up.



Marisa Myhre can be reached at 233-3610 or marisamyhre@hotmail.com.



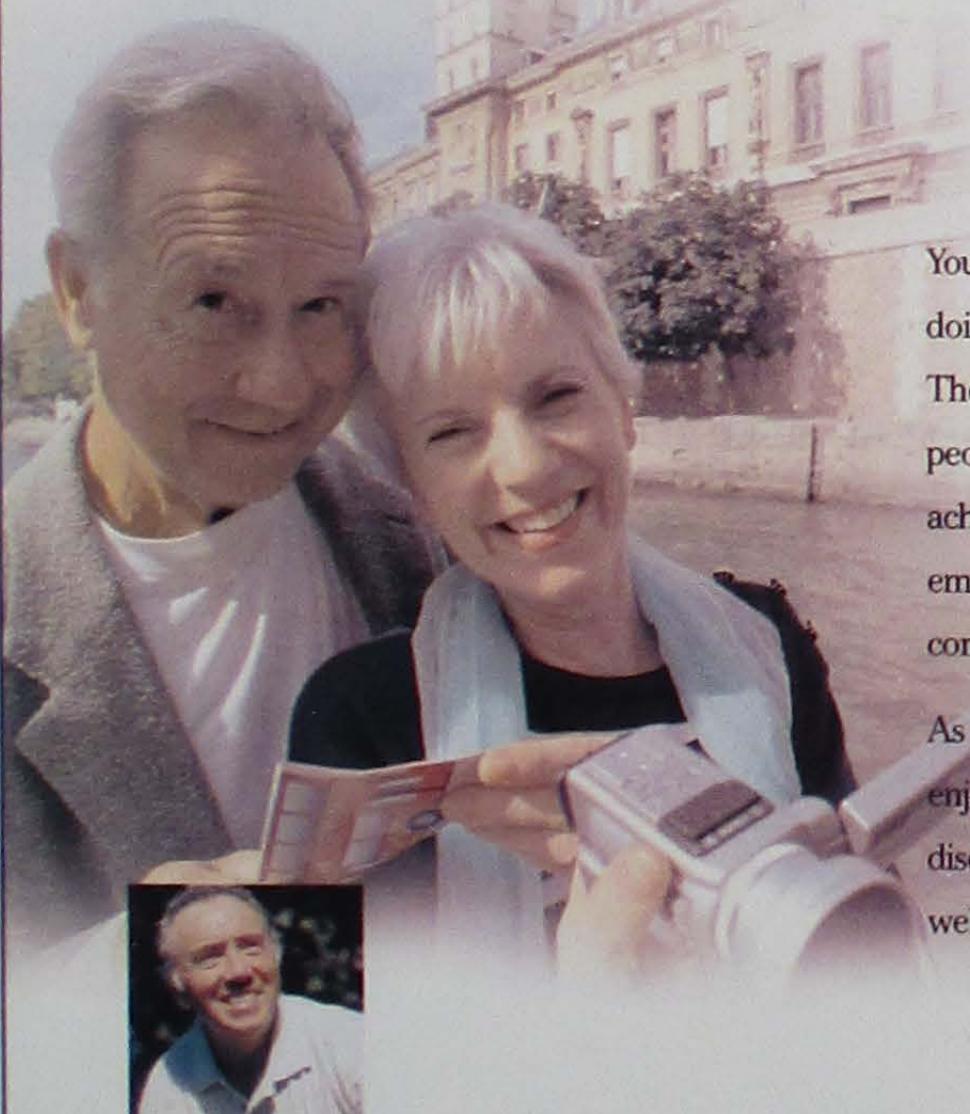
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